A Landmark Timeline of Video Game Music

This timeline presents a number of landmarks in the history of video game music. To avoid presenting a history that is inappropriately linear or giving a false impression of completeness, we have selected landmark moments that reveal the changing forms and technologies of game music, as well as game music's relationship with wider culture.

Year	*Landmark*		Contemporary technology and world events
1972	*Pong* (Atari)	Pitched sound is introduced into video games, with different notes linked to gameplay events.	The last mission of the Apollo space programme lands on the moon.
1975	*Western Gun/Gun Fight* (Taito/ Midway/Nutting)	Games begin to use distinctive melodies in the mid-1970s. This early example includes an excerpt of Chopin's 'Funeral March', when a character is killed.	The Altair 8800 is released in January, sparking the microcomputer revolution as the first commercially successful home computer.
1978	*Space Invaders* (Taito)	In likely the first example of continuous music reacting to the gameplay, the four-note ostinato in *Space Invaders* increases in tempo as the aliens advance.	The Camp David Accords are signed between Israel and Egypt.
1978	Yellow Magic Orchestra release an album of the same name	Yellow Magic Orchestra's first LP includes chip music, illustrating an early convergence between pop music and games. The single release 'Computer Game' subsequently influences early hip-hop and techno musicians in the USA.	
1979	'Space Invaders' song by Player (1) released	Using audio from *Space Invaders* and a bassline influenced by the game, this song becomes	Islamic revolution in Iran.

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		the inspiration for one of the first house records, 'On and On' by Jesse Saunders (1984).	
1981	*Frogger* (Konami/Sega)	*Frogger* is one of the earliest examples of a game where different pieces of music are cued depending on the game action.	First launch of NASA's space shuttle.
1981	'Pac-Man Fever' single by Buckner & Garcia	This novelty hit about *Pac-Man* finds chart success and is followed by a game-themed concept album of the same name in 1982.	
1982	Adoption of the MIDI 1.0 standard	MIDI establishes a standard way of communicating musical performance data. MIDI captures the instructions for performance, rather than the sonic output.	The Falklands Conflict erupts between the UK and Argentina.
1982	MOS 6581 SID chip is used as the sound chip for the Commodore 64	Designed by Robert Yannes, the SID chip offers composers great flexibility. Though it only features three main voices, composers can select waveforms for the channels and each has a wide pitch range. Beyond the Commodore, the SID chip in its several iterations and variations inspires musicians and becomes an important feature of the chiptune scene.	
1983	*Journey* (Bally/ Midway)	This arcade game, starring the band of the same name, features synthesized versions of Journey's music during the game. In the final level, an audio cassette built into the cabinet plays a looped, edited recording of Journey's 'Separate Ways'. This is not the first video game appearance of Journey: it is a successor to an earlier home console Journey game.	The first commercial mobile telephone call is made.
1983	*Moondust* (Creative/ Lanier)	One of the first so-called 'art games', created by Jaron Lanier for the Commodore 64,	

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		features generative music in an ambient style as a core part of the game's aesthetic.	
1984	*Ballblazer* (LucasArts)	In contrast to *Moondust*, *Ballblazer* features an algorithmically created theme song, 'Song of the Grid' by Peter Langston, in a rock style.	Bob Geldof and Midge Ure assemble a supergroup of musicians to perform a charity single under the name Band Aid.
1984	*Video Game Music* (LP)	Haruomi Hosono assembles the first commercial album of video game music, featuring captures and remixes of sound from Namco games.	
1986	*Dragon Quest Symphonic Suite* album	An album of *Dragon Quest*'s music is released, with the music arranged for orchestral performers. It marks the beginning of orchestral game music albums.	The Chernobyl nuclear power plant undergoes a catastrophic disaster.
1986	Special game music issue of the Japanese gaming magazine *Beep*	The Japanese gaming magazine *Beep* was first published in 1984. This special issue augments their audience significantly. After this issue the magazine features a regular section dedicated to game music.	
1986	*Soundmonitor*	Chris Hülsbeck releases his *Soundmonitor*, the first tracker program for users to create their own music, as a listing in the German computer magazine *64er*.	
1986	*OutRun* (Sega)	This arcade racing game by Sega is notable for several aspects, including its outstanding hardware and non-linear gameplay. It also allows players to choose the music to accompany their play. The music, composed by Hiroshi Kawaguchi, later inspires the synthwave genre called OutRun in the early 2000s,	

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		named in reference to 1980 aesthetics. *OutRun*'s music is played live by the Sega Sound Team (SST) during their concerts in the late 1980s.	
1987	Dragon Quest Concert in Tokyo	Koichi Sugiyama stages a 'Family Classic Concert' at Suntory Hall, Tokyo. The concert programmes his music from *Dragon Quest I* and *II* alongside Saint-Saëns's *Carnival of the Animals*. It is likely the first orchestral concert of video game music.	A West German teenager lands a light aircraft in Moscow's Red Square.
1987	*Dance Aerobics* (Bandai/Human, Nintendo)	This release for the Famicom/NES is the first game to feature a floor mat controller, the Power Pad. It anticipates later dance games.	
1987	*Otocky* (Sedic/ASCII)	*Otocky* is a musical sidescroller shoot-'em-up game by Toshio Iwai for Nintendo's Famicom. It is notable for its generative soundtrack, co-created by the player while playing. It was never released outside Japan.	
1987	Commodore Amiga makes extensive use of the MOD music format	The Amiga uses a format for storing music which is similar to MIDI, but also includes the instrument samples in the files, as well as the note data, which creates significant possibilities for unique musical timbres.	
1988	*Soundtracker 2*	'Exterminator' of the Dutch hacker group Jungle Command hacks Karsten Obarski's *Soundtracker*, and rereleases it as freeware under his own name, making the playback routine public. It starts the soundtracker revolution, and other trackers are later built from it (like *NoiseTracker* and *ProTracker*).	The Morris Internet Worm, the first internet-spread malware, wreaks havoc.
1991	*Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge* (LucasArts)	LucasArts debut iMUSE, an interactive music system, demonstrating complex	The Cold War ends with the dissolution of the USSR.

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		adaptive music programming including branching, layering and alternative variations. It even allows music to dictate game timing.	
1991	General MIDI standard established	To combat the high degree of variation between sound cards and hardware, General MIDI presents a template of 128 instruments, so composers are able to address specific instruments in their sound files. This ensures that, for example, a part written for a violin always sounds as a violin.	
1992	*Streets of Rage II* (Sega)	*Streets of Rage II* is the second entry in Sega's side-scrolling beat-'em-up series and features a soundtrack inspired by 1990s club music, created by Yuzo Koshiro and Motohiro Kawashima.	Atari, Nintendo and Sega are all involved in lawsuits concerning reverse engineering and modification of games.
1994	Michael Jackson is engaged to write music for *Sonic the Hedgehog 3*	Video games begin to attract major pop stars to write music specifically for games. One of the world's most famous musicians is involved in *Sonic 3*. Ultimately he is uncredited in the released game. His contribution to the finished game would long be the subject of avid speculation. British band Right Said Fred promote *Sonic 3* with their song 'Wonderman'. Jackson appears in several games, including *Moonwalker* (1989) and *Space Channel 5* (1999).	Nelson Mandela becomes the first president of South Africa.
1995	*Wipeout* (Psygnosis)	*Wipeout* is released as a PlayStation launch title in Europe and features music from electronic music acts such as Orbital, The Chemical Brothers, Underworld and Leftfield. It is part of a wider	eBay and Windows 95 are launched.

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		approach of Sony to market the PlayStation to a more mature demographic than earlier games consoles.	
1996	*PaRappa the Rapper* (NanaOn-Sha)	This rhythm-based music game is created by music producer Masaya Matsuura and Rodney Greenblat. A comic-styled dog PaRappa learns to rap from several teachers. It is a commercial success on the PlayStation in Japan and is one of the starting points of the Japanese music game boom of the late 1990s.	Dolly the sheep is born, the first mammal cloned from a somatic cell.
1997	*The Lost World: Jurassic Park* (Dreamworks) (PlayStation and Saturn)	This game, with music by Michael Giacchino, is one of the first to use a recorded orchestra for the soundtrack, made feasible by the space and facilities of CD-based consoles.	Deep Blue beats Garry Kasparov in a chess match, the first computer to beat a current world champion.
1997	*Beatmania* (Konami)	The DJ-style rhythm game *Beatmania*, along with *PaRappa*, launches the Japanese game music boom. *Beatmania* lends its name to Konami's eponymous Bemani line of music games.	
1998	*Dance Dance Revolution* (Konami)	*Dance Dance Revolution* (released in Europe as *Dancing Stage*), part of Konami's Bemani series, becomes internationally successful and starts a long-running series of games. In 2012, Konami creates a special edition of the game with the American Diabetes Association, The National Foundation on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition and the Let's Move! project for US schools' physical education classes. *Dance Dance Revolution* develops a very active fan community that engages in competitions all over the world.	Tencent and Google are founded.

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2000	*LSDJ* (*Little Sound DJ*)	Johan Kotlinski creates tracker software to turn a Game Boy into a synthesizer, allowing direct control of the Game Boy's five hardware sound channels with a straightforward interface. It becomes a staple of the chiptune scene.	Apocalyptic predictions of the consequences of the Millennium Bug computer date error fail to materialize.
2001	*Grand Theft Auto III* (Rockstar)	With DVD storage as a dominant format, games could now include significantly more recorded and licensed music. *Grand Theft Auto III* features pre-existing music as part of in-game radio stations, complete with announcers and fictional adverts.	The United States suffers a terrorist attack on 11 September, prompting a controversial 'War on Terror'.
2001	Release of the album *Music inspired by Final Fantasy: The Hollywood Symphony Orchestra and Chorus Perform The Music of Nobuo Uematsu*	In the 1980s and 1990s, most game music albums are only available outside Japan as expensive imports or as bootleg MP3s. In 1997, Stephen Kennedy starts the 'Project Majestic Mix', a group of game music fans who want to produce an album. Via the project's website, the group select the music and fund the project with donations from other fans. Kennedy contacts Uematsu and Square to clarify issues of copyright and licensing. He is successful and the first album is released. It is followed by three more albums of music from Square games.	
2001	*Rez* (United Game Artists)	The game *Rez* is released (in Japan in a bundle with a peripheral called the Trance Vibrator) aiming at recreating the experience of a rave.	
2001	Virtual music by In Extremo in *Gothic* (Piranha Bytes)	The German medieval rock band In Extremo appears in the fantasy game *Gothic*, performing their live rendition of 'Herr	

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		Mannelig'. For non-German language releases the performance was deleted, because of copyright issues.	
2003	Symphonic Game Music Concert in Leipzig	Opening the Leipzig Games Convention, Thomas Böcker produces the first commercial game music concert outside Japan, starting an ongoing tradition of Western concerts of game music.	The Human Genome Project is completed.
2005	*Guitar Hero* (RedOctane)	Starting a craze for rhythm music games in the West, *Guitar Hero* captures the interest of a wide audience attracted by the performative possibilities of the game.	YouTube is launched.
2008	*Spore* (Maxis)	Procedural generation is central to the 'God game' *Spore*. It features an elaborate music system that procedurally generates music on the fly, rather than playing pre-composed music. Similar examples include *No Man's Sky* (2016).	A major financial crisis affects banks and economies around the globe.
2008	Karen Collins publishes *Game Sound*	The first academic volume dedicated to video game music and sound gives the area of study new legitimacy.	
2008	'Auto-Mario Wipeout' or 'X Day' on Nico Nico Douga	On May 13th, 2008, Japanese video platform Nico Nico Douga bulk-deletes fan-made Automatic Mario videos because of copyright infringement. Automatic Mario is a specific subgenre of remix videos using customized Super Mario World levels to recreate popular songs and other music.	
2008	'Symphonic Shades' concert is broadcast live	The WDR Rundfunkorchester, conducted by Arnie Roth, perform a concert dedicated to the game music of Chris Hülsbeck: "'Symphonic	

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		Shades" – Hülsbeck in Concert'. This is the first game music concert to be broadcast live on radio and streamed on the internet.	
2009	*DJ Hero* (FreeStyleGames)	DJ game featuring the music of artists such as Daft Punk, DJ AM, Grandmaster Flash, DJ Jazzy Jeff, and many more, some included as avatars in the game.	The cryptocurrency Bitcoin is launched.
2011	Christopher Tin's 'Baba Yetu' wins a Grammy Award	Written for *Civilization IV* (2005), and later rereleased on Tin's 2009 studio album, 'Baba Yetu' becomes the first music composed for a video game to win a Grammy Award. It was nominated in the category 'Best Instrumental Arrangement Accompanying Vocalist(s)'.	Anti-government protests spread across the Arab world, a phenomenon named the 'Arab Spring'.
2011	*Rocksmith* (Ubisoft)	*Rocksmith* is released, featuring the option to plug in a real guitar and advertising that players can learn to play the guitar through the game.	
2011	*Top Score*, a radio show/podcast dedicated to game music begins	Emily Reese begins a long-running programme celebrating game music and interviewing composers on Classical Minnesota Public Radio.	
2012	*Journey*'s soundtrack nominated for a Grammy award	Austin Wintory's music for *Journey* is nominated for 'Best Score Soundtrack for Visual Media', the first time a game score is nominated in this category.	The Higgs boson elementary particle is discovered.
2015	*Undertale* (Toby Fox)	The rise of digital distribution and open or free development tools prompts a blossoming of independent game development. In seeking a different approach to high-budget releases from major studios,	The Paris Agreement on climate change is negotiated at a United Nations climate conference.

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		many such games embrace retro or nostalgic aesthetics (both generally and musically). *Undertale* is one such example, modelled visually, sonically and ludically on RPGs of the 1980s.	
2018	AR K-pop live concert opens the *League of Legends* World Championships	As e-sports tournaments come to more closely emulate traditional sporting events, Riot Games opens its annual *League of Legends* World Championships with a spectacular show including an augmented reality performance by K-pop group K/DA.	According to the UN, more than half of the world's population is now using the internet.
2020	*Journal of Sound and Music in Games* published	An academic journal dedicated to the study of music and games is launched by the Society for the Study of Sound and Music in Games.	The world experiences a global pandemic of the Covid-19 virus.
2020	Travis Scott stages a concert in *Fortnite*	12.3 million players attend a virtual concert in a game. Though online games have been hosting performances since the mid-2000s, this event brought new attention to the format.	